

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL

M E M O R A N D U M

May 28, 2008

TO: Members of the California Child Welfare Council (CWC)

FROM: Kim Belshé, Secretary, California Health and Human Services Agency
Hon. Carlos Moreno, Associate Justice, California Supreme Court

RE: CWC Organizational Structure & Next Steps

Beginning with the California Child Welfare Council's first meeting in November 2007, we have worked together and made steady progress on key components of a strategic framework that will guide the Council's work. We have achieved general consensus on draft vision and mission statements, guiding principles, and core criteria to guide the Council in selecting its initial areas of focus. At our April 2008 CWC meeting, we had a thoughtful discussion on possible organizational structures and focus areas that the Council might consider. We have acknowledged that, while there are many important challenges impacting child, youth and family outcomes in the child welfare system, our resources are limited. We have recognized that we must prioritize our short-term and long-term objectives and that the issue areas to be selected by the Council will not be our last, but rather our *initial* focus.

To continue our progress, we were encouraged by the Council at the April meeting to work with our respective staff and consultant team to develop a recommended approach on how to organize and focus our important work. This document reflects the approach that we will present to the Council for consideration and approval at the June 18, 2008, CWC meeting.

Our proposed approach is informed by Council meeting discussions, educational panels on significant challenges facing the child welfare system and its partners, and Council surveys. The approach also is consistent with Council responsibilities contained in the authorizing statute, AB 2216, and the draft vision and mission statements, guiding principles, and core criteria the Council has developed. In addition, the recommended approach is responsive to anticipated Federal findings resulting from California's recent Child and Family Services Review.

We believe the attached document reflects an effective organizational structure that will help organize and focus the Council's important work in the coming year. As noted, we will be discussing this document and seeking Council approval at our upcoming meeting. In the interim, if you have any thoughts or comments on the document and proposed structure, please forward them to Andrew Signey, Assistant Secretary, via email at asigney@chhs.ca.gov, no later than Wednesday, June 4, 2008. We will have any comments that members submit summarized for the June 18, meeting.

Thank you for your continued commitment to California's children, youth and families.

Attachment

California Child Welfare Council Proposed Organizational Structure

May 27, 2008

Background

We have reviewed the Council organizational structure discussion from our April 2008 meeting. There was general support expressed for the development of an organizational structure for the Council's work that addresses three primary outcomes for the child welfare system:

- 1) Early Intervention and Prevention: Preventing children, youth and their families from entering the system;
- 2) Permanency: Promoting permanency for foster children and youth, first through reunification with their birth families, and when this is not possible, through adoption, legal guardianship and/or a lifelong connection to a caring, committed, adult;
- 3) Child Development and Successful Transitions: Supporting children and youth to ensure their health, mental health, educational and social development needs are met and that youth are prepared to successfully transition to adulthood.

We also heard during the April Council meeting a strong interest in having the Council address issues relating to the disproportionate representation of African American and Native American children, youth and families in foster care. Finally, we heard recognition that data linkage and information sharing among systems and the courts is a fundamental challenge that requires the engagement of an interagency, multi-branch Council. Indeed, AB 2216 contemplates as much, specifically requiring the Council to report recommendations in this area.

Consistent with these goals and interests, we propose that the Council form four committees in the following areas: 1) Early Intervention and Prevention Committee; 2) Permanency Committee; 3) Child Development and Successful Transitions Committee; and 4) Data Linkage and Information Sharing Committee.

We propose that all four of the committees develop recommendations, as appropriate, designed to reduce disproportionality in the child welfare system. We believe that integration of this challenge focus area within each committee will enable this issue to be addressed in a manner most likely to result in real change. Similarly, we anticipate that all subcommittees will consider issues including access to services, promoting inter-agency and inter-branch collaboration, funding barriers and innovations, ways to bring best practices to scale statewide, and other subjects identified by the Council that relate to the work of *all* of the subcommittees.

On the following pages a more detailed description of each committee's purpose, along with further rationale for the particular focus of each committee, is provided. We anticipate that committees will use challenge focus areas identified by the Council at its prior meetings as a starting point for the June 18, 2008, discussion on goals and objectives. We also include our proposed approach to addressing Committee leadership and membership, Council expectations over the next twelve months, Committee staff support, and Council procedures and process.

Committee Overviews

1. Early Intervention and Prevention Committee

Purpose: To prevent children, youth and families from entering the foster care system.

Rationale: Preventing children, youth and their families from entering the child welfare system is an important State and local outcome. The earlier that challenges families are facing are addressed, the better the outcomes for children and youth, especially when families are voluntarily engaged in the services, supports and actions that empower them to safely care for their children at home and in their communities. This is the premise on which the State's recent Differential Response initiative was based. In addition, through panel presentations on access to services, disproportionality, and caregiver support, the Council heard the need for prevention and early intervention strategies to reduce the number of children, youth and families entering care, to better support individuals who have taken responsibility for the care of children and youth, and to prevent deterioration leading to entry into and more intensive involvement in the child welfare system.

Although AB 2216 does not contain a specific reporting requirement on early intervention and prevention per se, this committee's work would contribute toward meeting the statute's reporting requirements on both improving collaboration and coordination between county agencies, state agencies, federal agencies and the courts and coordinating available services for former foster youth and improving outreach efforts to those youth and their families. This focus area also would impact State and local outcomes for the numbers of children and youth entering and re-entering care, as well as the anticipated national outcome to reduce the disproportionate representation of minorities entering and involved with the child welfare system.

2. Permanency Committee

Purpose: To reunify children and youth with their families whenever possible. When reunification is not possible, to identify and support another path to permanency, through adoption, legal guardianship, or a lifelong, permanent connection.

Rationale: Reunifying children and youth with their birth families as soon as possible is a primary goal of the child welfare system. When reunification is not possible, it is the goal of the system to achieve permanence for children and youth through adoption, legal guardianship or a lifelong relationship to a committed adult. Educational panel presentations on access to services, caregiver support, lifelong connections/permanency and the disproportionate representation of African American and Native American families in the child welfare system articulated the need for greater access to coordinated, fair and equitable services, supports, and resources for families to empower them to be able to care for their children and youth, and when return to the home isn't possible the need to find and support extended family who can serve as caregivers. Similarly, for those children and youth who cannot return home, supporting caregivers or identifying a caring, committed adult in their lives becomes critical to ensure a successful transition from the child welfare system.

The Committee's work would support AB 2216 reporting requirements in the areas of improved collaboration, State permanency outcomes, and anticipated national CFSR findings on disproportionality. In addition, several best or promising practices exist in this area; the Council should explore ways to bring these practices to scale statewide.

3. Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee

Purpose: To ensure that the health, mental health, educational and social development needs of children and youth in the child welfare system are met and that youth are prepared for successful transitions to adulthood through collaborative partnerships at the State and local levels.

Rationale: It is anticipated that much of the work of the other proposed committees will focus on empowering families to care for their children and supporting caregivers and lifelong connections for those children and youth who are not able to be placed with or returned to their birth families. As the Council has heard from educational panels and foster youth on the Council, children and youth involved in the foster care system -- like all children and youth -- require support and services to ensure that their health, mental health, education, emotional, social, and other developmental needs are met. For those youth emancipating from foster care, access to postsecondary education, housing, employment, vocational training, and financial literacy skills, as well as a connection to a caring, committed, lifelong adult, also become increasingly important. The work of this committee will consider issues that impact child well being and transition age youth.

4. Data Linkage and Information Sharing Committee

Purposes: 1) To ensure that data is linked across major child serving agencies, including child welfare, education, health, mental health, and alcohol and drugs; and 2) to promote the sharing of information and data across systems that enables caregivers, social workers, multidisciplinary teams and the courts to ensure continuity of care and services for children, youth and families.

Rationale: The ability to measure outcomes across systems and the courts both at the State and local level is critical to improving the quality of and access to services and supports for children, youth and their families at risk of or involved with the child welfare system. The needs of children, youth and their families span across multiple systems, agencies and the courts. For example, though anecdotal evidence suggests that substance abuse is both a primary reason for entry into care and a major impediment to reunification, the child welfare system does not collect substance abuse treatment data on families it serves (there is no field for entering this information in the CWS/CMS system). Similarly, the Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs cannot provide data on families involved in the child welfare system that are treated in its programs. Another example is that basic education information about a child's educational progress – even whether the child is enrolled in and attending school – is often not shared with social workers, the courts, and others involved in overseeing the child's well being.

To effectuate positive change in child welfare system outcomes whether at the State or local level, greater data linkage and information sharing is needed. Moreover, based on the educational panel presentation in this focus area, significant analysis and research, such as the University of California, Davis report and the proposed Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) on Children in Foster Care recommendations, has been completed on key challenges and potential models with respect to which the Council is poised to provide leadership. Data linkage and information sharing also represents a focus area that would meet the five core criteria articulated by the Council and is identified as a specific issue for Council action under AB 2216.

Committee Leadership and Membership

AB 2216 authorizes the Co-Chairs to appoint committees composed of council members, experts in specialized fields, foster youth, program stakeholders, organizations, members of the judiciary and foster care public health nurses to provide advice to the Council on programs and services provided through the child welfare and foster care systems (Section 16542).

The Committees will share a common structure that will include leadership appointed by the Co-Chairs and membership comprised of a majority of Council Members. While committee membership is voluntary, we will request that Council Members interested in serving on a committee indicate any preferences they may have for committee assignments on the attached Committee Preference Form, and return this information to us no later than **Wednesday, June 4, 2008**. Submission of the form in advance of the June meeting will facilitate the anticipated initial subcommittee discussion planned for the upcoming Council meeting.

Every effort will be made to honor Council Members' committee preferences to the best of our ability, while also bearing in mind the need to ensure that committees remain at a manageable size, to align committee membership with particular areas of expertise, and to distribute members evenly among committees. At the same time, the Co-Chairs may request that specific Council Members serve on specific committees. To promote family-driven, youth-guided decision making, all committees will be expected to engage families and youth in the development of recommendations.

Given the fact that all committee recommendations are anticipated to address the work of multiple state agencies, we will be requesting that CWC Department Directors designate appropriate staff to serve on each committee. In addition, consistent with the inter-branch focus of the Council, we believe it is important to engage court representatives across all committees. Similarly, we recommend that Council Members representing county child welfare agencies be dispersed across committees to reflect the State and local partnerships necessary to improving outcomes for children, youth and their families.

Committees may access outside expertise as needed to assist members in understanding key challenges, identifying best and promising practices, and developing recommendations for the Council's consideration. Committees also will have discretion on how to conduct their work within a broad set of expectations and a timeframe agreed to by the Council.

Committee Work Plan for Fiscal Year 2008-09

We propose that the committees convene at the Council's June 2008, meeting for the purpose of developing two to three specific short-term and long-term goals and objectives that would form the basis of each committee's work over the next year.

On the following page is a table that lists proposed major committee activities, deliverables and deadlines. In addition to developing recommendations by June 2009, each committee will be asked to identify resources needed, if any, to adequately implement proposed recommendations. This resource identification process will include consideration of staffing and workforce training and development needs; cost implications at the Federal, State and local levels; flexible funding strategies and funding priorities (e.g. a greater emphasis on prevention dollars); and opportunities to leverage resources to the maximum extent possible. While we have set forth an ambitious schedule, we believe it is achievable given the Council's passion, expertise and enthusiasm for beginning our important work.

Committee Activities	Major Deliverables	Deadlines
<u>Initial Meeting</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop two-three short-term and long-term goals and objectives ➤ Set future meeting date ➤ Discuss additional Committee membership/expertise needed, if any 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Goal & Objectives * Meeting Date 	June 2008, CWC Meeting Committee reports on progress
<u>Work Plan</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review available data and information in goal areas chosen, including best or promising practices and initiatives ➤ Develop work plan for identification of recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Membership List * Environmental Scan * Work Plan 	September 2008, CWC Meeting Committee reports on progress
<u>Committee Recommendations</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Identify key challenges; ➤ Identify issues requiring clarification or discussion by Council, if any; ➤ Summarize available data and information; ➤ Develop recommendations (regulatory, statutory, other) including how to bring best practices to scale statewide; ➤ Identify what resources are necessary to adequately implement proposed recommendations, if any; ➤ Consider recommendations, as appropriate, to reduce the disproportionate representation of African American and Native American families in the child welfare system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Draft Recommendations 	October 2008 - June 2009 Committee reports on progress at December 2008, CWC Meeting and March CWC (TBD) CWC consideration and approval of Committee recommendations at June 2009 meeting
<u>New Goals & Objectives</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Identify next set of goals and objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Goals & Objectives 	July-August 2009 Committee progress report at September 2009, CWC Meeting

Council Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles

Committee recommendations will be consistent with the Council's draft vision, mission, and guiding principles scheduled to be approved at the Council's June 2008, meeting.

Committee Meetings

We will designate a specific portion of each full Council meeting to allow committees to meet, recognizing that committees most likely will need to convene outside Council meetings to complete their work in a timely fashion. In addition, should issues or challenges arise within committees that require consideration by the full Council, agenda items will be added.

Committee Staff/Consultant Support

Each committee will be assigned a lead staff or consultant from the Administrative Offices of the Courts (AOC) or the California Health and Human Services (CHHS) Agency to support the committee's work. The lead staff/consultants will serve as the day-to-day contacts for committee leadership and will be responsible to committee leadership, the Co-Chairs, and the Council for ensuring that committee deliverables and deadlines are met. Staff/consultant responsibilities will include working with committee leadership in setting committee meeting agendas; circulating meeting notices in compliance with Bagley-Keene; identifying and circulating committee resources materials and developing presentations as needed; preparing and posting meeting minutes; facilitating committee discussions; preparing committee background information; summarizing committee work for the full Council in a format to be determined; and submitting necessary information for the Council's annual report. Staff/consultant leads will meet monthly to ensure coordination of work across committees and to address any challenges or issues faced by the committees.

Committee Progress Reports

We envision several feedback mechanisms to the Council and public on committee progress:

- 1) Regular committee reports will be included on the Council meeting agenda to provide updates to the Council and public on the progress of each committee;
- 2) Council agenda discussion items will be scheduled as needed on committee issues and challenges requiring consideration by the full Council;
- 3) Committee progress reports, meeting minutes, and meeting agendas and notices will be posted on the Council web page;
- 4) A committee section will be included within the Council's Annual Report; and
- 5) Committee staff will participate in monthly meetings to inform each other of progress, discuss crosscutting committee issues and challenges, and keep the Co-Chairs informed about committee progress.

Approval of Committee Recommendations

AB 2216 authorizes states that: "...*The committees may assemble information and make recommendations to the council, but shall not exercise any of the powers vested in the council.*"

Consistent with AB 2216, the committees will prepare information and recommendations for the consideration and approval by the full Council.

Bagley-Keene

Committees will be required to meet Bagley-Keene requirements. This includes posting committee meeting notices and agendas at least ten (10) days in advance of committee meetings and enabling members of the public to attend and offer comments during committee meetings.

**California Child Welfare Council
Member Attendance & Committee Preference Form**

During the afternoon of the June 18, 2008, California Child Welfare Council (CWC) meeting, we suggest that each of the CWC Committees meet to develop initial areas of focus for committee activity over the next 12-18 months. In preparation for the June meeting and to assist the CWC Co-Chairs in appointing committee membership, we are requesting that you inform us as to both whether you will be attending the upcoming meeting and what your preferences are for committee membership, if any.

Please fill out the information below and return this form **by June 4, 2008**, to Andrew Signey, Assistant Secretary, California Health and Human Services Agency, via fax at (916) 654-3343, or via email at asigney@chhs.ca.gov. **Thank you!**

I. Meeting Attendance (please check one):

- ☐ I will attend the June 18, 2008, CWC meeting.
- ☐ I cannot attend the June 18, 2008, CWC meeting.

II. CWC Committee Preferences

- ☐ **Yes, I would like to serve on a CWC Committee.**

If you have any preferences regarding the committee you'd like to serve on, please rank in order of preference the committee(s), with "1" representing your first choice, "2" representing your second choice, "3" representing your third choice, and "4" representing your fourth choice. Please consult the Co-Chair memorandum for a description of the Committees.

- ___ Early Intervention and Prevention Committee
- ___ Permanency Committee
- ___ Child Development & Successful Youth Transitions Committee
- ___ Data Linkage and Information Sharing Committee